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May 1, 2020

Robert Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20515-0001

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

I am writing to request an urgent meeting with you to discuss the extraordinarily disappointing announcement I received via email today that the Veterans Administration is, for the second time “cancelling the current lease award and re-procuring the Brick, NJ, outpatient clinic lease.”

Our veterans deserve a new, expanded, state-of-the-art facility at which they can get the quality health care they deserve. Today’s announcement delays that reality for a second time and jeopardizes the health and welfare of veterans in central New Jersey.

As the former chairman of the Veterans Affairs committee and as the author of legislation that ultimately led to the establishment of the Brick clinic in the early 1990s, I am requesting your personal attention to this matter. I have also pushed the VA to pursue this important service upgrade because the current facility is currently handling as many as three times the number of appointments which it was originally intended to serve when I first introduced my legislation back in 1985 to establish a VA facility in Ocean County.

In 2014, Congress approved a legislative package I strongly supported which included the *Department of Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act* reauthorizing a new clinic to replace the Brick Clinic, as well as 26 other VA facilities across the country. It is my understanding that the majority of those 26 clinics have been replaced, yet the Brick Clinic remains one of the incomplete projects saddled by timeline postponements and two cancellations.

Having successfully spearheaded and supported the efforts to locate the CBOC in Brick, as well as VA clinics in Trenton and Hamilton (Mercer County) and Fort Monmouth, now in Tinton Falls (Monmouth County), and both the Vet Center and its Mobile Vets Center in Lakewood, I have seen first-hand how properly situated facilities can provide convenient, cost-effective, quality primary care for millions of veterans. I also know that VA personnel recognize the value of the clinics and want to see the solicitation and procurement process through to ensure the establishment of a facility that will provide our vets with the care they deserve.

I look forward to meeting with you to investigate and overcome the hurdles in this project. We need to ensure that this, the third procurement process, only represents a setback that will be properly resolved with the establishment of the long-overdue, top-notch facility our veterans need and deserve.

Please contact my scheduler Angela Ryan at 202-225-3765, angela.ryan@mail.house.gov to set up a meeting time and place, or in the current COVID environment, a video conference.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress